

HEALTH ALERT

A kitten from a colony of free-roaming cats in an isolated area in the vicinity of New Providence Road was recently found deceased. Testing revealed that the kitten was infected by rabies. All known exposures to humans have been addressed and there are no known exposures to resident pets. If anyone has knowledge of exposures to cats in this area please notify the health department at 732-968-5151 or mbrhc@middlebrookhealth.org.

The Borough of Watchung and St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center work closely in supporting and enabling the neutering and vaccination of community cats. Protocols for the effective humane control of community cats through a concentrated trap, neuter/vaccinate and return (TNR) program have been crafted with the Department of Health in Trenton. Such programs are nationally recognized as the best way to safely, humanely curb the outdoor cat population and had such intervention taken place in the colony where the infected kitten was born the situation may have been avoided.

According to protocol, the immediate relatives of the infected kittens will be euthanized to prevent any spread of the virus. St. Hubert's personnel and the health department are carefully monitoring the area to ensure that any other cats are trapped, neutered, and vaccinated.

The Borough and St. Hubert's remind residents that it is important that they not feed outdoor cats without taking the next important step of arranging for the animals to be neutered and vaccinated. St. Hubert's will assist any resident who is feeding cats and who needs those services. Adult cats are returned following neutering and vaccination. Young kittens are removed from the colony and welcomed to St. Hubert's for care, socialization and adoption. Watchung residents who need assistance with TNR should call St. Hubert's at 973-377-2295.

Pet parents are reminded to check that their own animals' rabies vaccinations are current as well so that they are protected should they come in contact with wildlife. Making sure domestic pets and free-roaming cats are vaccinated provides safety to both humans and other animals. The health department will be holding a free rabies clinic on May 5 from 9:00 am to 10:00 am at the Washington Valley Fire House on Washington Valley Road in Warren, NJ.